

Moses Yale Beach House
86 North Main Street
Wallingford
New Haven County
Connecticut

HABS No. CT-269

HABS
CONN,
5-WALF,
6-

PHOTOGRAPHS
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS
WRITTEN DESCRIPTIVE AND HISTORICAL DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS
CONN.
5-WALF,
6-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MOSES YALE BEACH HOUSE HABS No. CT-269

Location: 86 North Main Street, Wallingford, New Haven County, Connecticut

Present Owner: The Union and New Haven Trust

Present Occupant: The Union and New Haven Trust

Present Use: Demolished

Significance: The Beach House was the most luxurious house of its time in Wallingford and probably one of the largest town houses designed by Henry Austin.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1850
2. Architect: Henry Austin
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Union and New Haven Trust acquired the property from Choate School on October 27, 1958, of which they had acquired half undivided rights from John A. Martin, Wallingford and William H. Newton, Newfane, Vermont, each, in February 14, 1920, assuming all and taxes. Mortgages are recorded to Deep River Savings Bank by William H. Newton and Alice I. Martin on March 25, 1898. It is believed that Moses Yale Beach acquired the property upon his retirement in 1848 and "built his home on the site of the homestead of John Moss, Jr." [See Florence S. Marcy Crofut, Guide to the History and the Historic Sites of Connecticut, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1937, p. 654.] Also, "He [John Moss] was first located on a lot at the south end of the village, a short distance below the present residence of Constant Webb, and adjoining his friends, John Brockett and Samuel Brown, to whom was assigned the lot on which the Beach house now stands" [See: Charles Henry Stanley Davis, History of Wallingford, Connecticut, published by the author, Meriden, Connecticut, 1870.]
4. Builders, suppliers, etc.: Unknown
5. Notes on original plans: Original watercolor renderings of the front elevation and one side elevation are in the Beinecke Rare Books Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.
6. Alteration and additions: No information available

- B. Historical Context: The owner, Moses Yale Beach, is best known as the owner of the New York Sun, first purchasing an interest in it in 1835. Mr. Beach is also known for being part-inventor of the stern-wheel steamboat with Thomas Blanchard. At

the request of President Polk, he visited Mexico and secured interview and agreements which were the basis for the subsequent treaty of peace. He died in Wallingford on January 19, 1968.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

- a. Original watercolors, Beinecke Rare Books Library, Yale University.
- b. Town Records, Wallingford, Connecticut - Office of the Town Clerk

2. Secondary and published sources:

- a. Encyclopedia of Biography, Representative Citizens, Connecticut, American Historical Society, N.Y., 1919.
 - b. Florence S. Marcy Crofut, Guide to the History and Historical Sites of Connecticut, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1937.
 - c. Charles Henry Stanley Davis, History of Wallingford, Conn. Published by the author, Meriden, Conn., 1870.
 - d. C.B. Gillespie (Compiler), Souvenir History of Wallingford, The Journal Publishing Company, Meriden, Conn., 1895 located in Wallingford Public Library.
 - e. Publicity Committee, Wideawake Wallingford, published by the Committee, Wallingford, Conn. 1913 - located in the Wallingford Public Library.
 - f. William F. Stevens, History of Wallingford, an undated Scrapbook of series of news clippings by the author - located in Wallingford Public Library.
3. Likely sources not yet investigated: Records of the Choate School, Wallingford, Conn., which owned and operated the Beach house as St. George's Inn, a hotel for parents.

Part II. Architectural Information.

- A. General Statement: Note that this house was demolished to a great extent after the property was bought by the Union and New Haven Trust, although as it stands today on the same site, there are traces of its original character. The following description is therefore based on photographs now in the HABS collection which were taken during the demolition.

B. Detailed Description of the Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Not ascertained, although it appears to have been quite large, the center block of three bays being 3 stories in height and the two side wings of three bays each being two stories in height. The entire cruciform shape was surrounded by a gallery or piazza on the first floor.
2. Wall construction: Wood frame painted white
3. Porches: A piazza encircled the whole house with thirty-seven columns. Several of these columns are now in use in the present building, though they now rest on painted brick piers.
4. Chimneys: At least six brick chimneys are visible
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance door was a glazed panel door with sidelight and transom, all ornately trimmed and framed with carved wood surround.
 - b. Windows: The windows on the first floor appear to be floor to ceiling height and the second floor windows are d/h 2/2. All windows are treated with an elaborate surround in carved wood.
6. Roof:
 - a. Shape and covering: flat hipped roofs; covering not ascertained.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Wide overhanging eaves, with egg-and-dart motif on face of eaves.
 - c. Cupola: a square cupola with an extremely wide overhang was centered on the roof with two ornamental brackets on each face at the corners.

C. Detailed Description of the Interior:

1. Floor Plan: No drawings or evidence found to describe the floor plan.
2. Stairway: Unknown, however one photo shows graceful curving stairway through a doorway.
3. Flooring: Wood
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster
5. Doorways and doors: Available photos indicate that the doorways were elaborately framed and trimmed in a pseudo-baroque manner. Doors were solid mahogany
6. Decorative features and trim: Besides the doorways with their elaborate trim, one photo indicates a heavily carved cornice.
7. Notable hardware: Unknown
8. Lighting: Unknown
9. Heating: Presumably fireplaces were originally used. The fireplaces themselves apparently were very handsome white marble

D. Site and Surroundings:

1. Orientation: On North Main Street between Center and Church Streets, facing east.
2. Outbuildings: Unknown
3. Landscaping, walks and enclosures: There were large flagstone walks and an ornamental iron fence on the front. This fence is still in place, including the graceful iron gateway.

Prepared by Woodrow W. Wilkins
National Park Service
27 August 1964

Edited by: Jack Barker, Jr.
HABS Historian
National Park Service
August 25, 1984